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## **The Call, Life and Faith of Abraham Part 4 Abraham's Faith Grows through Worship: Tithing Genesis 14**

How are you doing this morning? How are you doing with your faith walk with God. Did you try staying in a worshipful mode last week? Did you ask God for a trigger, a reminder, something that would pull you into His presence during the busyness of your days?

I hope you did, I hope that as you stayed in a worshipful mode so when those trials and temptations came up you were able to resist the temptation to step away from God and try and handle them on your own.

That is the faith journey of Abraham we are looking at. Did Abraham get it right every time? No, he failed and he failed big but he got up, hopefully learning from his experience and growing stronger so that next time he wouldn't fail as big.

I like this picture I saw on Facebook. **PIC**

That is the our life isn't it? Sure we would like not to fail, not failing is the goal of our life, but for most, there is so much going on in our lives that we inevitably do fail at times but we have Christ who helps us up, helps us to heal and then helps us to overcome.

As we continue to look at the life of Abraham we can see he was doing pretty good.

If you remember from last week Abraham was challenged to step out and take control of his life. He was traveling on the road God laid out before him and he had taken Lot, his nephew with him. Both and Abraham and Lot continued to be blessed by God so much so that the time had come to separate the two families.

Both clans had a tremendous amount of livestock and the land they were in could not sustain both families. Abraham, in a great move of faith, stepped back from making a decision and asked his nephew to choose if he wanted to take the land on the left or the right. Lot, being a selfish fellow took the better land and left the desert land to his uncle Abraham.

As Abraham was preparing to move his family and livestock out into the desert God showed up and told Abraham not to worry for all the land was going to be his and his descendants. So Abraham moved his family into the desert and built an altar to the Lord and once again, began worshipping God.

This was the point of truth we looked at last week. If you stay in a place of true worshipping of God in your life you will not only be able to respond to what is happening in your life in a positive way but God will bless you in the process.

Now, I am going to give you a quick summary of what happens in chapter 14 of Genesis. In a certain season of the year, kings of different countries would form alliances then go out and raid and try and conquer the surrounding territories. Several kings came together and began raiding the cities around them. Sodom and Gomorrah was one of the territories they raided and conquered. They took all the people and goods.

Look with me at **Genesis 14:11-13a**, “**Then they took all the goods and Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed. They also took Lot, Abraham’s nephew, and his possessions and departed, for Lot was living in Sodom. Then a fugitive came and told Abraham...**”

So Abraham’s nephew Lot is taken when Sodom and Gomorrah gets sacked. We know Abraham is in a good place because he holds no ill will towards Lot for being so selfish. He rallies his men and chases after the army. He overtakes them, defeats them and this is where we find ourselves in the story of Abraham’s life.

Let's read our passage.

**Genesis 14:16-20, “<sup>16</sup> He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people. <sup>17</sup> After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). <sup>18</sup> Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, <sup>19</sup> and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. <sup>20</sup> And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.”**

There are two great events that occur in the passage. The first one is the introduction of Melchizedek.

It has been approximately 400 years since the flood. 400 years since there was any written indication that God has interacted with the people of earth. The silence is broken when God reaches out to Abraham or so it seems.

By the statement made in this passage, Melchizedek was a priest of the God Most High, one almost gets the feel that God has been working behind the scenes.

### **1. God is always working behind the scenes**

That is just like God though isn't it? We think we have Him and His plans figured out only to find out God is up to something different than we had thought.

I imagine Abraham probably thought he was the only one God was speaking to. After all, he was promised by God that a great nation that would last for eternity was going to be created through him. Abraham probably was taken a bit by surprise by Melchizedek's presence and the fact that he was a priest of the most high God.

I could spend more on who Melchizedek is but I won't. David mentions him on one of his Psalms and there is quite a bit information about him in the book of Hebrews where he is compared to Christ.

For this morning though, we want to examine what Abraham's response to him is.

Look back at your passage in Genesis 14.

**<sup>18</sup> Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, <sup>19</sup> and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. <sup>20</sup> And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.**

After being honored and blessed by Melchizedek Abraham recognizes him as being from God. How does he respond? By worshipping him. By giving him a tenth of everything.

Here we have the first mention of a tithe to the Lord. Nothing up to this point has been said about a tithe. There have been offerings but nothing so substantial as giving a tenth of what you have to the Lord. This is a first.

As you begin to study the Old Testament, God through Moses, begins to set up how we should worship Him. Within the laws found in Exodus and Leviticus, God lays out how His people should give. But that is 400 years in the future.

What I wanted us to focus on this morning is Abraham's act of worship through the giving a tithe, a tenth of what he had received.

For the rest of the sermon I wanted to transition into a teaching in the New Testament. I want to speak with you have the story of one of Jesus' miracles, the feeding of the 5,000 found in Mark 8.

Read with me beginning in verse 1. **Mark 8:1-3, "During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."**

First of all it is easy to see the compassion Jesus has upon these people. They had been following Him, listening to His teachings for three days and apparently most of them had nothing to eat. This is the nature and promises of Jesus isn't it?

## **2. When people follow Jesus He is compassionate and begins to look for ways to ease their burdens.**

What was it Peter said about Jesus? **1 Peter 5:7, "Cast all you anxiety on Him because He cares for you."**

Even though God and Jesus have a heart for all of mankind and it is their desire that none shall perish there is a special compassion and care for those who follow them.

Let's read on. **Verse 4, "His disciples answered, 'But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?'"**

Here we see the disciples are not in tune with who Jesus is and what He is capable of yet. They are questioning how this can be done and not asking Jesus how He wants to do this thing.

This is something we can easily get caught up in as well isn't it? We get caught up in the dollars and sense of things, or our physical capabilities or the capabilities of those professionals around us and we forget that there is one who is spiritual, one who can do exceedingly beyond what we can even imagine or think.

I wonder if it might have been better for the disciples to have asked, 'Okay, this is our in front of us, how do you, Jesus, want to accomplish it?'

Look at the next verses. **Verse 5-7, "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked, 'Seven,' they replied. He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When He had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, He broke them and gave them to His disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. They had a few small fish as well; He gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them."**

Here we see Jesus taking what was offered, blessing it and then multiplying it. Earlier in Jesus' ministry we read about a young lad that had 5 loaves and two fish and Jesus did the same thing with them. He blessed the 5 loaves and fishes and multiplied them to feed 5,000 men plus the women and children that were present.

As I thought about this can you imagine being that young boy who had the five loaves and 2 fishes. First the boy had to be willing to surrender all he had to Jesus and His disciples. Then I am sure he was hoping that whatever happened that there would be enough for him to have something to eat.

Can you imagine his surprise and excitement when Jesus took the loaves and fish he had given up and them turned into who knows how many? This boy was part of the miracle that Jesus performed. He provided the physical substance which Jesus blessed and multiplied.

This is what happens when we offer up our physical tithes and offerings isn't it? We present our offerings to the Lord and offer a prayer that He would use it to further His kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.

We see this playing out right here before our eyes. Your tithes and offerings are being used to further God's kingdom through this place. Many lives are being touched and many more will be in the future.

Kingdom Kidz had 59 children here Wednesday night and we can only reach these children because of your generosity and faithfulness in your giving. Our youth programs, Sunday School and many other ministries are able to occur through your giving. Last week the church bought a microwave for someone who was in need. We provide food the hungry, gifts to those who are struggling, physically, financially and in other ways.

When you are faithful in your tithe, a lot occurs.

This is what God said about our tithes and offerings. **Leviticus 27:30, "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord."**

Everything originates from the land. Everything that is produced throughout the world is from the minerals the earth provides. It was created by God for us. All of it is His but He only asks for 10% of it to be given back for His kingdom and His kingdom work.

- 3. The tithes and offerings we offer up are holy to the Lord and when these holy offerings are placed into the Lord's hands, miracles occur.**

Back to the story of the loaves and fishes. **Verses 8-9, "The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. About four thousand people were present."**

From the seven loaves and a few fish Jesus was able to take this offering, multiply it, feeding four thousand people and there was seven basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish left over. Amazing isn't it?

A couple of things we can glean from this miracle. First of all, what was seven loaves and two fish in the hands of the disciples? Seven loaves and two fish. But what was seven loaves and two fish in the hands of Jesus? The opportunity to do wonderful and miraculous things.

4. **If you walk by sight and not by faith then you will only go as far as the loaves and fishes you have.** But if you put the loaves and fishes in the hands of Jesus by the giving of your tithe He has the ability to bring forth many, many more thousands of loaves and fishes, which will not only give you an abundance but will also provide plenty for those around you.

Only the food that comes from the Lord's hands has this ability to materialize into miracles.

In closing I wanted to share a testimony that was shared from a woman who was in our church in Kansas. Joyce's life has not always been easy. She lost a son in a car wreck. Her husband passed away and her daughter recently developed a debilitating disease. Times have been hard for Joyce.

But through these things Joyce has kept her faith in the Lord and she has been faithful in worshipping Him in many ways including tithing. Years ago she developed the habit of writing her tithe check for to the Lord and then living by faith off of the rest. There were times, when things got a little tight or she saw something she wanted that she was tempted to use her tithe money but she didn't. She said she knew that God's tithe was non-negotiable. It was His money and it was holy unto the Lord.

As Joyce continue to share her testimony, she shared with me that she was amazed that as she was faithful in her tithing she watched as God would take the remainder of her check and make it work, stretching it to cover all of her needs.

In other words, much like the loaves and fishes, Joyce has been part of an ongoing miracle. When placed in the hands of Jesus, the offering is used to feed the masses both physically and spiritually and like the seven baskets left over, there is always, always enough monies left over for our needs.

This matter of trust and obedience is what we are trying to learn as we examine the life of Abraham. When Abraham saw an opportunity to put his trust in God he was obedient. He stepped out in faith not knowing what the outcome would be but knew it was going to be good because God was in control.

Over and over again we see how God blessed Abraham even when he messed up.

For some of you 10% is a lofty goal. 5% or even 2% is more of a realistic place to start but starting is what God is hoping you will do.

Sit down with God, with your spouse and make a plan, a commitment to the Lord and then sit back and by faith watch God work in your life and through this church.

He will. He has promised that as we are obedient He will show up in ways that are exceedingly, abundantly over and above all that we can imagine.

**In the hands of Jesus, your tithe becomes a miracle.**

Amen?